

This year has seen an increased focus on the environment and renewable energy, from funds in the Recovery Act to legislation in Congress. Policy in Washington is falling in line with Central Coast values, and I look forward to continuing to move our country in that direction.

In March, the president signed into law a package of more than 160 laws related to public lands that created 2 million acres of wilderness land across nine states, designated 1,000 miles of scenic and wild rivers and created three national parks and a national monument. Also in the bill was a law I sponsored, the Ocean Research and Exploration Enhancement Act, that established two important ocean research programs: the National Undersea Research Program and the National Ocean Exploration Program.

There has also been a lot of debate lately on a law intended to limit greenhouse gas emissions. It's yet to be determined when such a bill will be introduced and what shape it will take, but even to have such focused attention on this issue is an important step. President Obama has made clear his support for addressing climate change, and we know that the lessons and examples we've provided in California will be very important to that process.

Another important bill that is making its way through Congress is the Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement Act, known as the FLAME Act. This bill, which the House has already passed, would create a funding source for battling wildfires on federal land and require the Departments of Interior and Agriculture to develop a comprehensive wildland fire management strategy. On the Central Coast, we know all too well how important having a successful strategy for fighting fires can be, and this is a very important bill to reach that goal.

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